(Problem Statement) There are many beloved fans and respected admirers of the life of Lucille Ball. Recent research on Lucille Ball has addressed all of the areas in which she was a pioneer and a genius in the areas of television and American comedy, assuming that her life has always followed an easy, successful path. Whereas this assumption has generated important research, the emphasis on her innovative approach and improvements to American television has meant that few studies have considered the impact of the many obstacles and misfortunes that she faced in her life and how they helped to shape her personality, an issue which I will explore in this article.

(lit review) Researchers have suggested that Lucille Ball was a pioneer in American comedy entertainment and enjoyed success on many levels. Her number one rated television show in the 1950s, *I Love Lucy*, revolutionized American television and paved the way for future comedy sitcoms. She won five Emmy Awards, she was the first woman on the cover of *TV Guide*, she was the first woman to run a major production company, Desilu Productions, and she won many prestigious awards including the International Radio and Television Society’s Gold Medal, the Kennedy Center Honor Award, and the Presidential Medal of Freedom Award. Above all, however, Lucille Ball remains known as the “Queen of Comedy”. Although it is sixty years after the filming of the original *I Love Lucy* television shows and more than twenty years after her death, Lucille Ball still inspires many. For example, Lori Landay’s journal article, "Millions `Love Lucy': Commodification And The Lucy Phenomenon", written in 1999, explains, “Today, Nick at Nite reruns, websites, fan conventions, collectibles, television specials, books, videotapes, laserdiscs, the merchandising, and the recent popular vote to put Lucy on a U.S. postage stamp commemorating the 1950s are all evidence of the contemporary Lucy phenomenon” (page 26).

While most research has portrayed a picture of Lucille Ball as always being confident, successful, and in control, opportunities remain to critically analyze the many unfortunate occurrences in her childhood and adulthood. It is only by closely examining the many obstacles and misfortunes of her life that a true, complete picture of her character can be shaped. The study of these dimensions of her life accent her tremendous perseverance and make her successes all the more notable. Throughout each season of Lucy’s life, hardships are recorded. In her young life, these include the death of her father before age four, being abandoned by her mother and step father when they left town to find work elsewhere, growing up with an alcoholic stepfather who disliked children, surviving poor conditions, and being sent home from drama school in New York City at the age of fifteen. While trying to establish a career in New York City at the age of seventeen, she developed a serious case of rheumatoid arthritis and was sent home again to recuperate for a period of almost three years to learn how to walk again. As Lucy moved into adulthood, life also was not easy. Establishing a life in Hollywood was difficult work, and many times, she was cast in “B-rated” movies. In addition, although the love of her life was Desi Arnaz, it was a difficult marriage, eventually ending in divorce in 1960. Undoubtedly, these misfortunes in her life contribute to her determination to succeed, her need for attention, her need for comedy to mask the seriousness about her life, and her need for her partner Desi Arnaz. To understand the whole personality of Lucille Ball, these life-shaping aspects of her life need to be given considerable recognition.